

TO... DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

National Intelligence Council

20 March 1985

NOTE FOR THE DIRECTOR

FROM: Herbert E. Meyer
VC/NIC

This is must reading. Once again, Charlie Douglas-Home has produced a masterpiece of accuracy and clarity. Charlie reports today that he has never written an editorial which has produced such a violent reaction from the government as has this one. Clearly, he has drawn blood.

I recommend you pass this editorial up the line. Or, you may wish to hold it until Jay and I produce that memo for Don Regan.



Herbert E. Meyer

Attachment:
"Howe's UDI from SDI"



P.O. Box 7, 200 Gray's Inn Road, London WCIX 8EZ. Telephone: 01-837 1234

HOWE'S UDI FROM SDI

The Foreign Secretary's speech on SDI (the Strategic Defence Initiative) on Friday may have done untold damage to the cohesion of the Atlantic Alliance at a critical juncture of renewed east-west negotiations. It has already caused astonishment and pained reaction in the inner circle of the American administration which had hoped for some Alliance solidarity on SDI and had assumed, on the basis of Mrs Thatcher's speech to the joint session of Congress, that they would get it. The Prime Minister's endorsement of research, even though qualified by the Four Points established at Camp David before Christmas, seemed to indicate a readiness to accentuate the positive and necessary elements of SDI such as its strategic philosophy and technical potential. All that has now been undermined by Sir Geoffrey's speech.

It was mealy-mouthed, muddled in conception, negative, Luddite, ill-informed and, in effect if not intention, a "wrecking amendment" to the whole plan. In the circumstances of Geneva it might more appropriately be described as "the Gorbachov amendment". Sir Geoffrey has handed Mr Gorbachov all the best lines with which to oppose SDI and drive that wedge between Europe and America which the Foreign Secretary piously warns us about in his last paragraph.

Whatever they may say in public, the Americans in private are not amused. Nor are they inclined to regard Sir Geoffrey's intervention simply as a familiar exercise in which the foreign office, like their own state department, makes effeminate noises which are at variance with the chief executive authority in Downing Street or the White House. Mrs Thatcher's conver-

sations in Moscow have not gone down well in Washington since she claims to have told Mr Gorbachov what President Reagan means by his approach to SDI. If Washington wants President Reagan's words to be interpreted to Mr Gorbachov, Washington needs no intermediary, even one of Mrs Thatcher's standing.

Her tendency to cast herself in the role of bridge-builder surfaced momentarily after the trip to Hungary but since then has subsided until Mr Gorbachov's arrival in London last December. Clearly his accession to the highest office has turned too many heads in London. There is always a latent tendency in Britain to pose as a bridge-builder, and now that Mr Gorbachov is in the saddle, there may be an official temptation to believe that the British Government has an inside track with the new Soviet leader, which should be exploited. In the circumstances of Geneva, and the arguments now opened up by Sir Geoffrey's speech, it seems that it will be Mr Gorbachov who will do the exploiting.

Sir Geoffrey's theme seems to be based on the idea that deterrence is an end in itself when of course it is not. It is a means to an end. That end is the prevention of all kinds of war, nuclear and otherwise. Sir Geoffrey's devotion to that technique

of deterrence called MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) – on which, during the absence of any technical defence against incoming missiles, we have had to rely solely – has been elevated into an almost Luddite hostility to the idea of change even when the technology appears to be changing and the philosophy is losing its credibility in public opinion.

Moreover, the speech seems to reveal an ignorance about Soviet theory and practice which is most disturbing. For a start the Soviet Union has never accepted MAD as a stable system of mutual deterrence. It has worked strenuously to build up proper defences against a nuclear retaliation with an enormous civil defence effort and with research and development into missile defences which goes far beyond anything suggested in Sir Geoffrey's speech (nine lines in 27 pages). That work constitutes a blatant violation of the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty which Sir Geoffrey virtually ignores, while lecturing the United States repeatedly on its need to comply with the treaty.

He says that "rather than die by the nuclear sword we have lived by the shield of deterrence", when in fact MAD epitomizes the posture of a man who has no shield but simply a sword with which to retaliate.

He refers to a stable system of deterrence when the history of détente shows that strategic stability is not attainable, nor should one expect it to be so given the basic philosophy of Soviet strategy which, whatever Soviet leaders say to the west, has remained unchanged in its determination to smash the democratic system wherever and whenever it can. That is why Sir Geoffrey's hopes of negotiation on the basis of mutual confidence and goodwill once again springs from a dangerous misunderstanding both of Soviet intentions and of the purpose of negotiation. If there was goodwill there would be no negotiation. We would not both be armed to the teeth against each other. We cannot expect to achieve anything by negotiation with the Soviet Union unless we recognize that it is and always

will be conducted against a background of ill-will born of the incompatibility of the two systems - liberal democracy and Marxist-Leninism dedicated to the former's destruction.

In his hostile attitude to the prospects of replacing defence

based on retaliation with a defensive system based on protection, Sir Geoffrey resembles a man who would prefer not to have a lock on his front door but instead to 'rely' solely on a shotgun fixed up and targeted on the garden gate, triggered to go off only after his house had been burgled or burnt down, but not before.

There are dark warnings against going down the defensive road of SDI and a litany of technical questions which are all designed to cast doubt on the feasibility of the project. He warns against the likelihood that it would be "only a limited defence". Can he honestly claim that MAD provides an unlimited defence at present, when we have witnessed the Soviet Union take

advantage of the high nuclear threshold to carry out so many armed encroachments on the world around us which certainly undermine our total defensive position?

A more serious aspect of Sir Geoffrey's speech is that its approach to the technicalities of SDI and the Luddite language which he deploys completely ignores the range of technical briefings and assurance given to the Prime Minister in two sessions with President Reagan and his technical advisers, and another long briefing on the full potentialities of the system given by Mr McFarlane and General Abrahamsen in London on January 9, fresh from Geneva. Either there has been no contact between the Prime Minister and her Foreign Secretary or, more likely, a political decision has been taken in the week of Geneva and in the wake of the Moscow visit to distance Her Majesty's Government decisively from the position of the Reagan Administration. What is the purpose of such a decision, unless it is to attempt to give Europe a distinctive argument against SDI, with particular reference to West Germany? The

West German position, and its attitude to the whole question of SDI and the transfer of high level technology, will be explored in detail tomorrow, but the consequence of such a developing European posture could well be disastrous to Alliance solidarity during this period of east-west negotiation.

The SDI now threatens to become the focus of one of the most serious rifts in the Atlantic Alliance since its inception. Of course the disharmonies, discrepancies and imbalances of scale and responsibility have been with us for 37 years. They surface intermittently during periods of contention over force levels, nuclear planning, east-west trade, the Soviet gas pipeline and many others, but the SDI brings many of these differences together in a new and dramatic form at a time when a new isolationism is foot in the United States with its economy and technology fast outpacing Europe to a point where, unless we are careful, impatience in the United States and resentment in Europe at this emerging gap could lead to further disillusionment and disarray. That prospect must be avoided by more prudent diplomacy on both sides of the Atlantic.

That Sir Geoffrey's speech could have been given at this time, and in those terms is a failure of foreign policy in the state department for not getting across to Europe the message of the SDI. It is also a failure of understanding in London. At such a time, with the Geneva talks beginning and Mr Gorbachov poised to exploit the historic Soviet aim of decoupling Europe from America, it is indeed astonishing that the British Government chooses this moment to be so negative about what ministers know is the core of the Reagan administration's strategic philosophy. It cannot be by chance. It must be a political act whose consequences, if they are only half as damaging as they now appear, could well go down in history as one of the most ill-fated British decisions since the era of appeasement. This time the British may have Germany on their side; but the menace of the dictatorship we confront is the same.